

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

9 May 1980

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: The National Security Council

SUBJECT : Growing Unrest in South Korea and Prospects  
for Takeover by Military Strongman Chon Doo Hwan

1. Current reporting indicates that the level of antigovernment activities by South Korean students, supported by opposition political leaders and workers, is coming to a head. Student activists and sympathizers have enumerated a series of demands and set a deadline of 14 May for government action, failing which they threaten demonstrations in the streets. ROK authorities are reportedly devising a series of steps to forestall a confrontation, with the use of force the last resort. It appears doubtful, however, that the activists will respond to government pleas for moderation. The outcome of clashes by students and troops, if they occur, will depend on the response of several key actors, and certainly on the state of mind and the role played by military strongman Chon Doo Hwan.

2. While what we have observed of North Korean reactions to developments in the South since the Park assassination does not yet suggest an intention to exploit the situation militarily, I continue to be concerned about the adequacy of warning on Korea. In this light, the current South Korean unrest, which brings with it the possibility of a military takeover, is yet another in a series of recent events that could undermine stability in the South and tempt Pyongyang to attack.

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STANSFIELD TURNER

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

9 May 1980

ALERT MEMORANDUM\*

GROWING UNREST IN SOUTH KOREA AND PROSPECTS FOR  
TAKEOVER BY MILITARY STRONGMAN CHON DOO HWAN

*A serious confrontation between ROK authorities and South Korean students is taking shape. While only a portion of the university student enrollment is involved, activists appear determined to test the permissiveness of the authorities and have put forward a series of political demands deemed unacceptable by ROK authorities, including the lifting of martial law by 14 May and the dismissal of top government leaders. Students in many parts of the country are planning to take to the streets and stage marches if their deadline is not met.* [REDACTED]

These developments have caused great concern among ROK officials, particularly since they are occurring at a time of labor unrest. Officials are particularly alarmed about the possibility that student and labor demonstrators will join forces in the streets. President Choi is reported to be considering a variety of measures to deal with these threats but probably lacks the will and ability to act decisively. The ROK Army Chief of Staff placed the infantry regiments of five divisions, the Special Warfare Command, and the Capital Security Command on standby alert. They are to be prepared to move into Seoul to support Martial Law Command efforts to control student demonstrators. On 6-7 May, two special forces brigades moved into the Seoul area, joining four others garrisoned there.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

*\*The Alert Memorandum is an interagency publication issued by the Director of Central Intelligence on behalf of the Intelligence Community. Its purpose is to ensure that senior policymakers are aware of impending potential developments that may have serious implications for US interests. It is not a prediction that these developments will occur. This memorandum has been coordinated at the working level with CIA, DIA, NSA, and State/INR.*

[REDACTED]

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The outcome of clashes between students and troops would depend upon the reactions of opposition figures, the business community, and the general public. Opposition political leaders already have expressed support for some student demands and have called for a special National Assembly session later this month to discuss the situation. Sympathy for the students among other elements, however, is limited. The majority of South Koreans probably hope that actions which might lead to instability, to a military dictatorship, and to a loss of foreign--and especially US--confidence can be avoided. It is possible, therefore, that the authorities would be able to suppress student activism without causing the confrontation to spread to other sectors of society. It is also possible, however, that such clashes--especially if they involved loss of civilian life--might bring workers and opposition political leaders into the confrontation and rupture the process of political reconstruction under way since President Park's assassination. [REDACTED]

The attitude and role of military strongman Lt. Gen. Chon Doo Hwan with respect to these developments probably will be decisive. If, as [REDACTED]

All of the actors in this situation will, however, be very mindful of US Government attitudes. Student and opposition party leaders will be looking to the United States to restrain and inhibit crackdowns by the ROK Government and the military. Chon himself will want to avoid as much as possible provoking US reactions that could undermine his position or the US/ROK security relationship. Nevertheless, if Chon believes that the United States is out to get him and that his power within the ROK military is eroding as a result, he may be prepared to discount US attitudes in the interest of taking full control of the government. [REDACTED]

North Korea does not currently appear to be taking any military steps in response to the deteriorating political situation in the South. However, the events of 26 October and 12 December 1979 caught the North by surprise. That is not true of the present situation. As we pointed out in SNIE 42/14.2-79, 20 December 1979, and in an Alert Memorandum, 8 February 1980, the emergence of widespread civil disorder in the South would prompt Pyongyang to consider forceful reunification of the peninsula. If Washington were seen to be preoccupied with the situation in South Asia and domestic issues, Pyongyang would probably be further emboldened by a conclusion that the US capacity to resolve the situation in the South or to defend South Korea was seriously weakened. [REDACTED]

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NFAC NOTICE

8 January 1979

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GUIDELINES FOR ALERT MEMORANDA

1. The issuance of an alert memorandum should be considered when:
  - Events are moving toward a development threatening to US interests and it is not clear that senior policy officers are fully aware of the implications of such a development; or,
  - Events are moving toward a development so threatening to US interests that it is desirable for the DCI to forward his assessment to senior policy officers despite their general awareness of the problem.
2. The alert memorandum is not a prediction. An event need only be a reasonable possibility, although in such a case the memorandum should make this clear. Moreover, the more critical the potential event for the US, the lower the probability threshold required.
3. Any element of the Intelligence Community can recommend that the DCI issue an alert memorandum. Such a recommendation should be made to the appropriate NIO, who, in consultation with NIO/W, will decide whether to forward the recommendation to the DCI. The final decision whether or not to issue a memorandum will require consideration of probability, criticality, awareness and prior reaction of the US Government, the danger of crying wolf, and the danger of lessening the impact by alerting too often. The memorandum should be independent of other intelligence issuances, the existence of which should never be the deciding argument against alerting.
4. Alert memoranda should be brief, no more than 1 1/2 - 2 pages. It is not necessary to rehearse the evidence. Rather, emphasis should be given to implications; the reader should understand why these developments could lead to serious damage to US interests. A final paragraph, to be prepared by the NITC, should discuss in brief Community collection posture and any changes in tasking that have been made or may be required. In addition to the alert memorandum proper, a one paragraph cover memorandum addressed to the NSC should be prepared for the DCI's signature. This should contain a succinct statement of the warning message.
5. A supplementary alert memorandum on a crisis should be produced whenever in the view of the DCI, the crisis has greatly intensified or changed in some especially significant way. The NIO should issue an appropriate advisory to the recipients of an alert memorandum whenever, in his judgment, events indicate that the crisis at hand has abated or terminated (unless that fact is apparent to all).

6. The responsible NIO will either draft the alert memorandum, arrange for its drafting, or adapt an existing intelligence document. When preparation of a memorandum is set in motion, he will notify his Community colleagues. (NIO/W will notify the members of the Warning Working Group). The NIO should seek as much coordination as time permits. At least telephone consultation is mandatory. The degree of coordination should be indicated in the memorandum, and any major differences of opinion within the Community should be noted.

7. The attachment contains technical procedures. All personnel should be aware that alert memoranda normally take precedence over other production.

8. When time is of the essence, any of these procedures may be bypassed.

  
Sayre Stevens  
Deputy Director  
National Foreign Assessment Center

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Attachments:

1. Procedures for Preparing an Alert Memorandum
2. Examples of Alert Memorandum

Distribution "A" (1-6)

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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

Date

ALERT MEMORANDUM\*

(Title)

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*\*The Alert Memorandum is an interagency publication issued by the Director of Central Intelligence on behalf of the Intelligence Community. Its purpose is to ensure that senior policy makers are aware of the serious implications for US interests of impending potential developments. It is not a prediction that these developments will occur.*



The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

(Date)

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Security Council

SUBJECT : (Alert Memo Title)

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STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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(CLASSIFICATION)

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NFAC NOTICE

12 March 1979

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GUIDELINES FOR ALERT MEMORANDA\*

Rescission: NFAC N 50-3, dated 8 January 1979

1. The issuance of an alert memorandum should be considered when:

- Events are moving toward a development threatening to US interests and it is not clear that senior policy officers are fully aware of the implications of such a development; or,
- Events are moving toward a development so threatening to US interests that it is desirable for the DCI to forward his assessment to senior policy officers despite their general awareness of the problem.

2. Any element of the Intelligence Community can recommend that the DCI issue an alert memorandum. Such a recommendation should be made to the appropriate NIO, who, in consultation with NIO/W, will decide whether to forward the recommendation to the DCI. The final decision whether or not to issue a memorandum will require consideration of probability, criticality, awareness and prior reaction of the US Government, the danger of crying wolf, and the danger of lessening the impact by alerting too often. The memorandum should be independent of other intelligence issuances, the existence of which should never be the deciding argument against alerting.

3. The alert memorandum is not a prediction. An event need only be a reasonable possibility, although in such a case the memorandum should make this clear. Moreover, the more critical the potential event for the US, the lower the probability threshold required.

4. The alert memorandum is not an SNIE, nor is it a situation report. It is not necessary to rehearse the evidence, nor to develop all the arguments. Rather, emphasis should be given to implications; the reader should understand why these developments could lead to serious damage to US interests.

5. If Paragraph 4 is heeded, the alert memorandum can be kept brief; it should be no more than 1 1/2 - 2 pages. In most cases, it need contain only four paragraphs:

- What new developments, in brief, have caused us to issue this memorandum?

\*All NFAC personnel should study these guidelines and retain them for future reference.

- What potential new development of an alarming nature do they suggest?
- What are the implications for the US policy-maker? With what pressing new problems must he cope?
- What, in brief, is the Community collection posture? What changes in tasking have been made or may be required? (To be prepared by NITC).

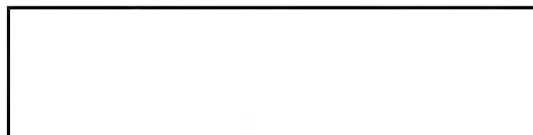
In addition to the alert memorandum proper, a one paragraph cover memorandum addressed to the NSC should be prepared for the DCI's signature. This should contain a succinct statement of the warning message.

6. The Alert Memorandum should be wherever possible a Community issuance, issued under the aegis of an NIO. The NIO should seek as much coordination as time permits. At least telephone consultation is mandatory. The degree of coordination should be indicated in the memorandum, and any major differences of opinion in the Community should be noted. Observance of the guidelines on brevity and purpose will greatly ease the coordination process.

7. A supplementary alert memorandum on a crisis should be produced whenever, in the view of the DCI, the crisis has greatly intensified or changed in some especially significant way. The NIO should issue an appropriate advisory to the recipients of an alert memorandum whenever, in his judgment, events indicate that the crisis at hand has abated or terminated (unless that fact is apparent to all).

8. The attachment contains detailed procedures. All personnel should be aware that alert memoranda normally take precedence over other production.

9. When time is of the essence, any of these procedures may be bypassed.



STAT

John J. Hicks  
Deputy Director  
National Foreign Assessment Center

Attachments:

1. Procedures for Preparing an Alert Memorandum
2. Examples of Alert Memorandum

Distribution "C" (1-3)

Procedures For Preparing An Alert Memorandum

GENERAL:

- The appropriate NIO is responsible for the substance of Alert Memoranda. He may assign the drafting to an NFAC office or, in some cases, to another NFIB agency.
- PPG is responsible for the mechanics of production and dissemination.
- OCO will assist in the process wherever possible, but cannot take responsibility for the substance of the memoranda.

1. When it is decided that an Alert Memorandum will be produced, the NIO will:

- STAT      -- Notify OCO Senior Operations Officer [ ] and C/PPG      STAT  
             or DC/PPG [ ]
- Prepare an Alert Memorandum distribution filling in the appropriate office designation on Pages 2, 3, & 4. A sample distribution is attached.
  - Notify his colleagues throughout the Community that a draft memorandum will be disseminated for coordination.
  - Notify his corresponding NITO that a collection paragraph will be required.
  - Prepare a rough draft.

2. NIO/W will notify the members of the Warning Working Group. He will also issue a memorandum to all NFAC elements, informing them of the subject, responsible NIO, responsible office, drafter, and deadline.

3. The NIO will deliver the rough draft to PPG, C/Text Preparation Branch (7G30). PPG will put the memorandum on cards and return the first draft as expeditiously as possible to the NIO. The NIO will then disseminate by LDX for coordination. Drafts for State Department should be addressed to Philip H. Stoddard, INR/RNA, Room 4524, State Department.

4. When coordination is complete, and the collection paragraph is in hand, the NIO will deliver this draft with changes to PPG. It should include in this package a covering memorandum for the DCI's signature transmitting the document to the NSC. PPG will then prepare the memorandum in final to go forward.

5. The NIO will then successively clear the memorandum in final with:

- The NIO for Warning
- D/NFAC
- DDCI
- DCI for signature

6. The NIO for Warning can be omitted when the matter is urgent. The DDCI can sign for the DCI if the DCI is not likely to be accessible in the near future.

7. If an Alert Memorandum is in its final stages at close of business, it is essential that the NIO or a substantive officer designated by him remain on duty until the DCI has signed off and his questions and changes have been accommodated. This responsibility cannot be left to the Senior Operations Officer.

8. The finished memorandum along with any changes made in the course of clearance will then be returned to PPG for final typing and reproduction. When the matter is urgent, or when the process is completed after normal duty hours, the Senior Operations Officer will make an initial dissemination by LDX. He should also provide a copy to DD/CT and the NITO. Hard copy dissemination will be made by the first scheduled courier run, although dissemination by special courier may on occasion be desirable.

Attachment

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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D. C. 20505

(COVER MEMORANDUM)

(Date)

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Security Council

SUBJECT : (Alert Memo Title)

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STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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